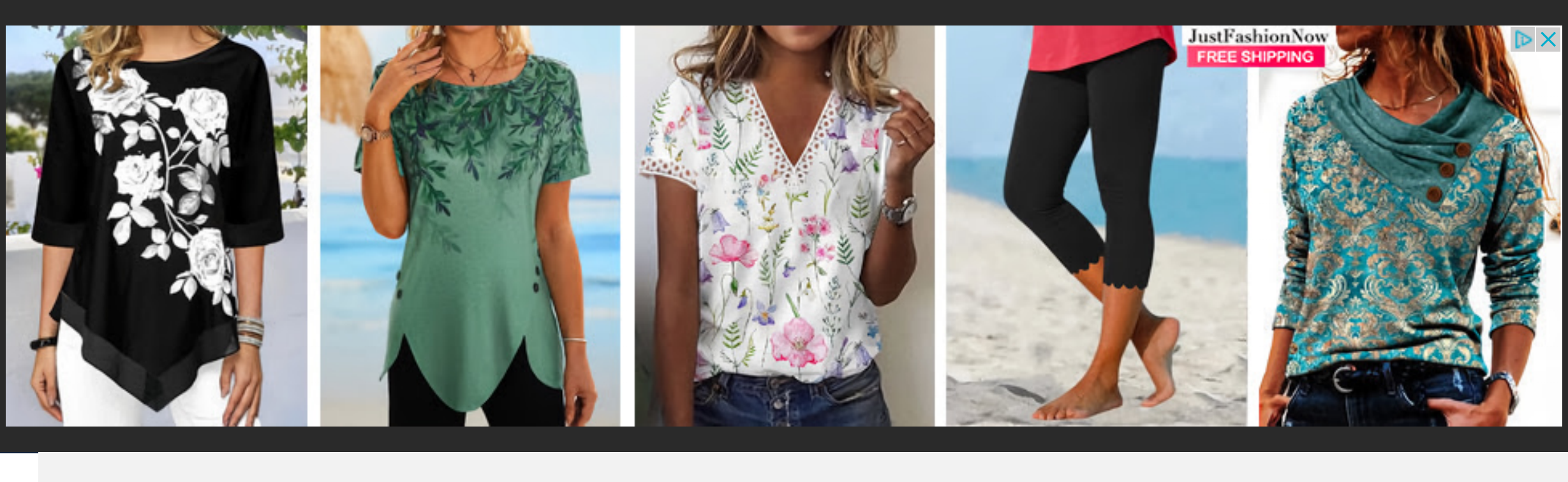


JustFashionNow
FREE SHIPPING

CULTURE MATTERS

Parents sue TikTok over deaths of two girls after 'blackout challenge'

It's the second time families have sued TikTok over the deaths of children who were said to have taken part in the "blackout challenge."

TikTok's London office. Tolga Akmen / AFP via Getty Images file

SAVE

Create your free profile or log in to save this article

July 7, 2022, 2:56 PM MDT

By Wilson Wong

The parents of two young girls who died after they were said to have taken part in the “blackout challenge” on TikTok have sued the popular social media app – the second time the platform has faced a lawsuit over the same challenge.

Lalani Erika Renee Walton, 8, of Temple, Texas, and Arriani Jaileen Arroyo, 9, of Milwaukee, died last year after they were both said to have tried to do the blackout challenge, which encouraged social media users to choke themselves until they pass out, according to the lawsuit, filed June 30 in Los Angeles County Superior Court.

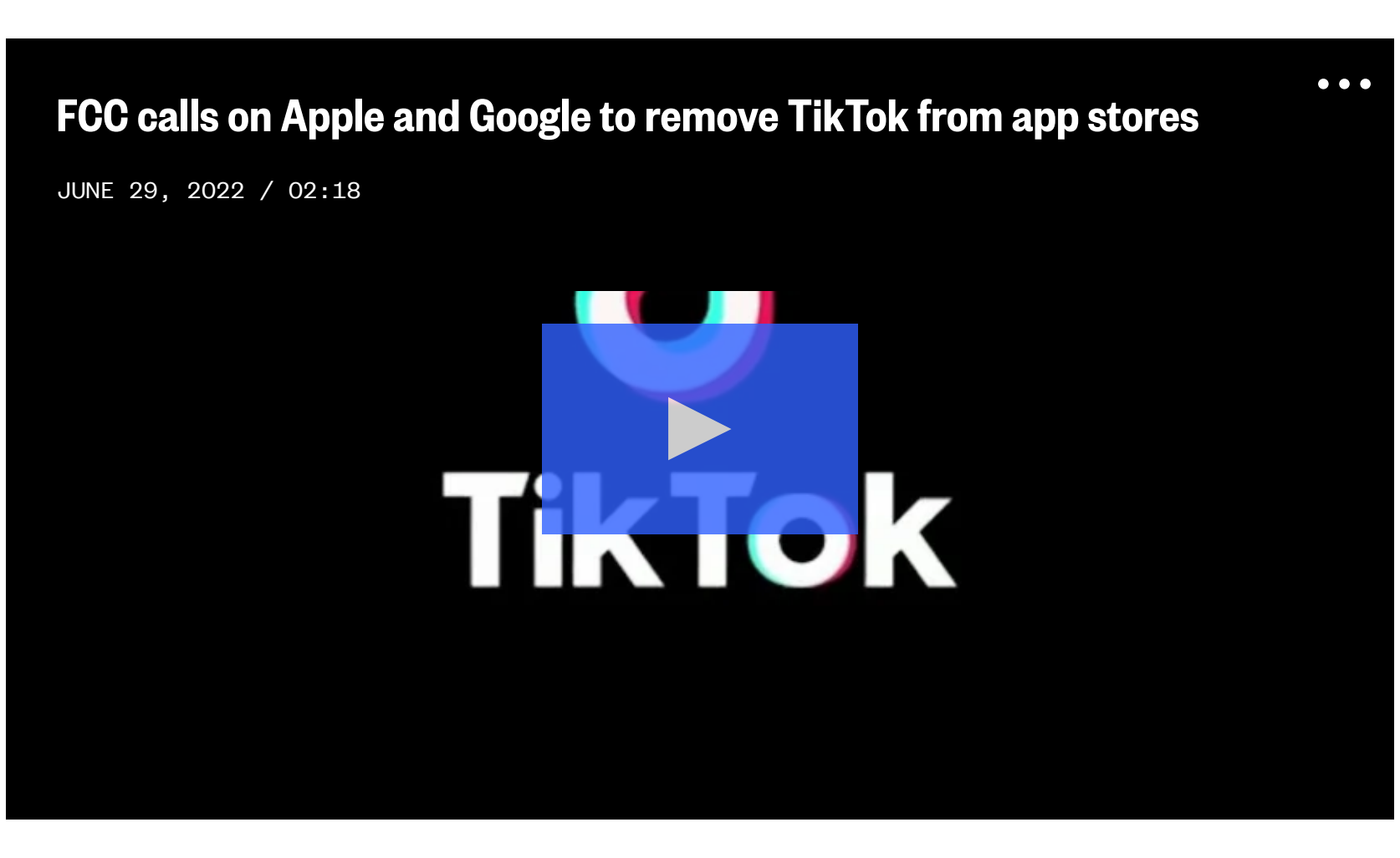
The children's parents are represented by the Social Media Victims Law Center, a law firm that "works to hold social media companies legally accountable for the harm they inflict on vulnerable users," according to their website. The law firm did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The complaint said that the platform's algorithm failed to properly warn users and their parents and that it intentionally pushed an "unacceptably dangerous video" on the girls' "For You" pages, which show users videos they may like based on their previous interactions with the app.

“TikTok has specifically curated and determined that these Blackout Challenge videos – videos featuring users who purposefully strangulate themselves until losing consciousness – are appropriate and fitting for small children,” the lawsuit said.

A TikTok spokesperson declined to comment on the lawsuit, referring NBC News to its previous statement in December after the mother of a 10-year-old girl alleged to have died after she took part in the viral challenge launched a wrongful death lawsuit against the social media app and its parent company, ByteDance.

"This disturbing ‘challenge,’ which people seem to learn about from sources other than TikTok, long predates our platform and has never been a TikTok trend,” TikTok said in a statement. “We remain vigilant in our commitment to user safety and would immediately remove related content if found. Our deepest sympathies go out to the family for their tragic loss.”



FCC calls on Apple and Google to remove TikTok from app stores

JUNE 29, 2022 / 02:18

Internet challenges have been a growing source of panic for parents and doctors alike who are concerned that it can potentially cause serious injury.

Get the Morning Rundown

Get a head start on the morning's top stories.

Enter your email
SIGN UP

THIS SITE IS PROTECTED BY RECAPTCHA PRIVACY POLICY | TERMS OF SERVICE

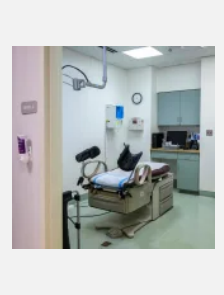
Some that appear to have evolved from TikTok include the milk crate challenge and the Benadryl challenge, which were both cited in the lawsuit as other examples of the platform's algorithm promoting dangerous behavior. There has been little evidence of the latter as a widespread challenge, and the platform disabled both the “Benadryl” and “BenadrylChallenge” hashtags to prevent copycats.

According to the complaint, Lalani got her first phone when she turned 8 last year and quickly became addicted to TikTok. On July 15, 2021, after Lalani and her stepmother returned home from a road trip, Lalani was told to clean up her room while her stepmother rested before they left the house again to swim.

Recommended

CULTURE MATTERS
Google and Yelp disable reviews on some crisis pregnancy center pages amid activist 'spam' campaign

INTERNET
Highland Park suspect’s disturbing YouTube posts point to gaping hole in social media moderation



When her stepmother woke up, she found Lalani in her room with a rope around her neck, the suit said.

Authorities told her stepmother that Lalani "did not commit suicide" and that she had been watching videos of the blackout challenge on TikTok and had tried it herself, the complaint said.

Arriani was 7 when she got her phone and also quickly became addicted to watching videos on the social media app, according to the suit. In January 2021, Arriani told her mother about a young girl in Italy who died attempting the social media challenge, to which her mother told her she was not allowed to attempt such a thing.

About a month later, on Feb. 26, Arriani was found hanging from a leash in her home, the complaint said.

The lawsuit described Lalani as an "extremely sweet and outgoing" girl who "loved dressing up as a princess and playing with makeup." She "didn't shy away from the spotlight," and when she grew older, "she wanted to be a famous rapper, like Cardi B."

The complaint described Arriani as "an active child and enjoyed playing basketball, kickball, and riding her bicycle."

"She loved to dance and was enrolled in a ballet class at school," it said.

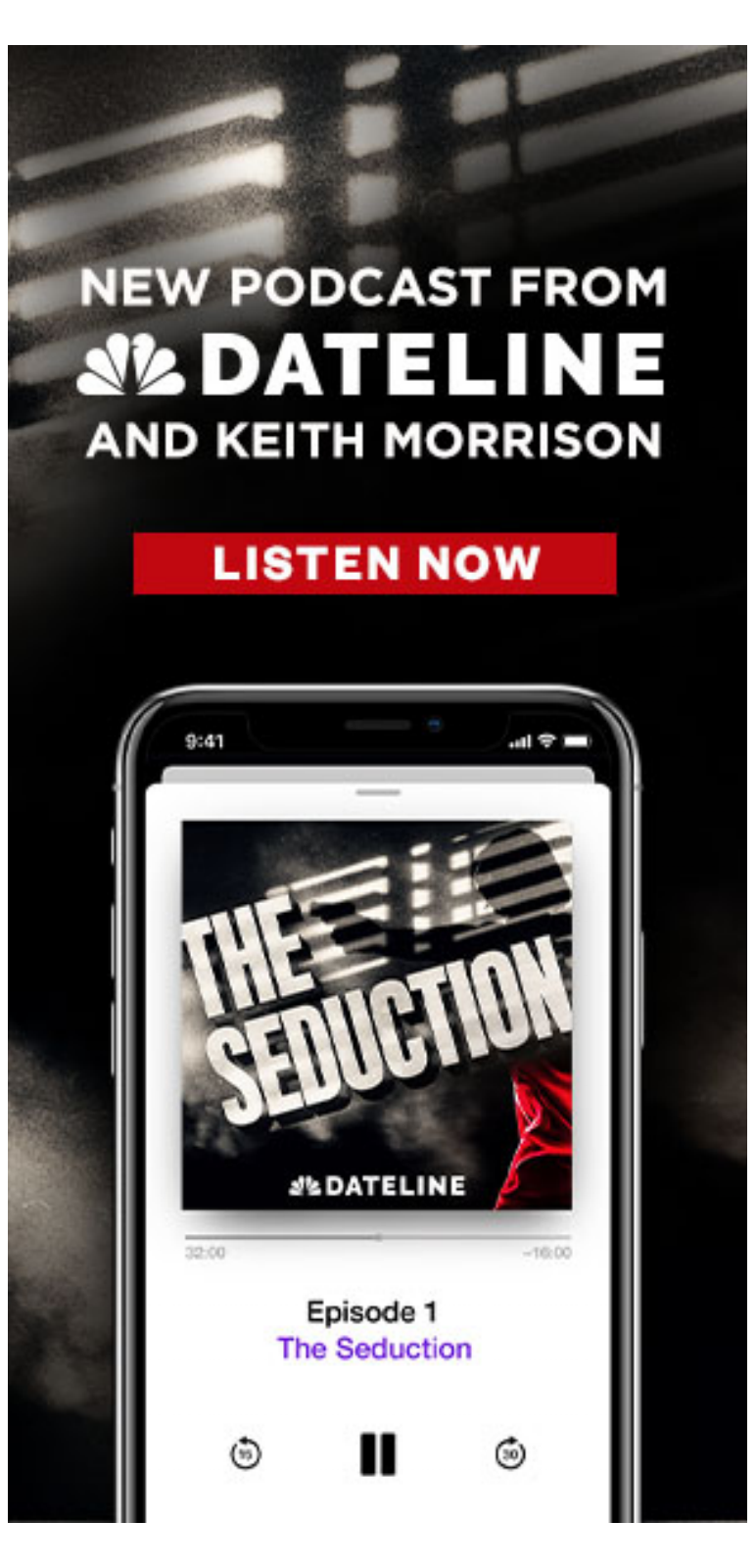
Wilson Wong

Wilson Wong is a culture and trends reporter for NBC News Digital.

Sponsored Stories by Taboola

GRISHAY
These Women's Soft Sole Sandals Are Taking Arizona By Storm

VACATION DEALS
2022's Best All Inclusive Resorts, Vacation Deals & More



Taboola Feed

SPONSORED / GRISHAY
These Women's Soft Sole Sandals Are Taking Arizona By Storm
The promotion ends as soon as the reduced models are sold out

SPONSORED / VACATION DEALS
2022's Best All Inclusive Resorts, Vacation Deals & More

SPONSORED / SWEETTH
The Best Walking Shoes For Women To Wear All Day Long Without...

SPONSORED / DOGFOODDISCOVERY.COM
How Dogs Cry For Help: 3 Warning Signs Your Dog Is Crying For Help

SPONSORED / AUTO SAVINGS CENTER | SE...
Volvo's Gorgeous New Lineup Has Arrived

SPONSORED / ALASKA CRUISE DEALS | SP...
Unsold Alaska Cruise Cabins Are Almost Being Given Away: See Prices

SPONSORED / SURSELL
Sursell Women's Casual Orthotic Slippers Near Arizona
Beautiful Slippers. When I first saw them I didn't think they were going to fit my wide feet, but they did. I love them.

SPONSORED / HYUNDAI PALISADE SUV SALES
The New Hyundai Palisade Is Nearly Unrecognizable

SPONSORED / SUV DEALS | SEARCH ADS
Phoenix: Unsold Never-Driven Cars Now Almost Being Given Away: See...

SPONSORED / FINANCE DAILY
Arizona Will Cover Homeowners Cost To Install Solar And Battery Backup

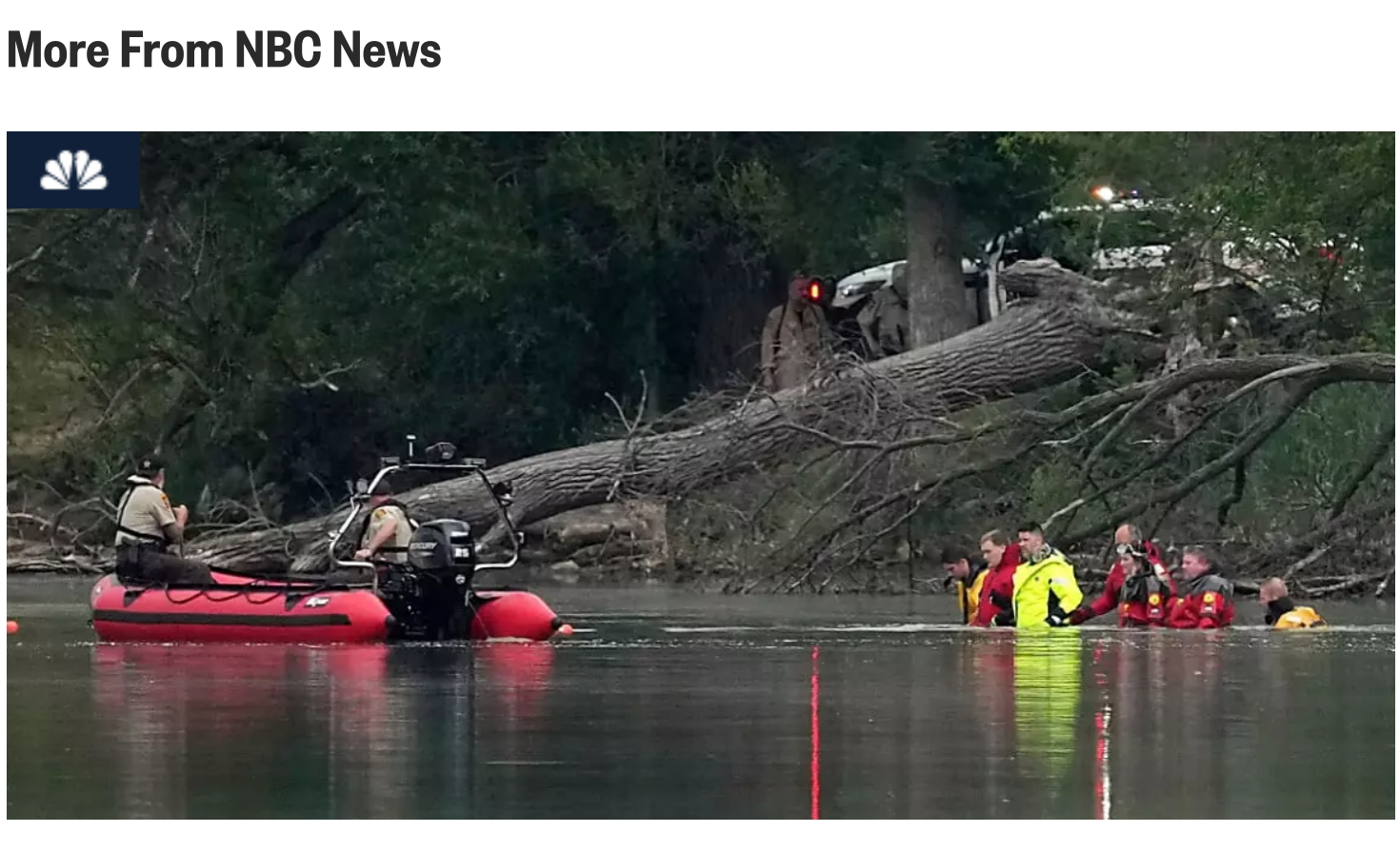
SPONSORED / CAMPER VAN WAREHOUSE | S...
Most Affordable Camper Vans

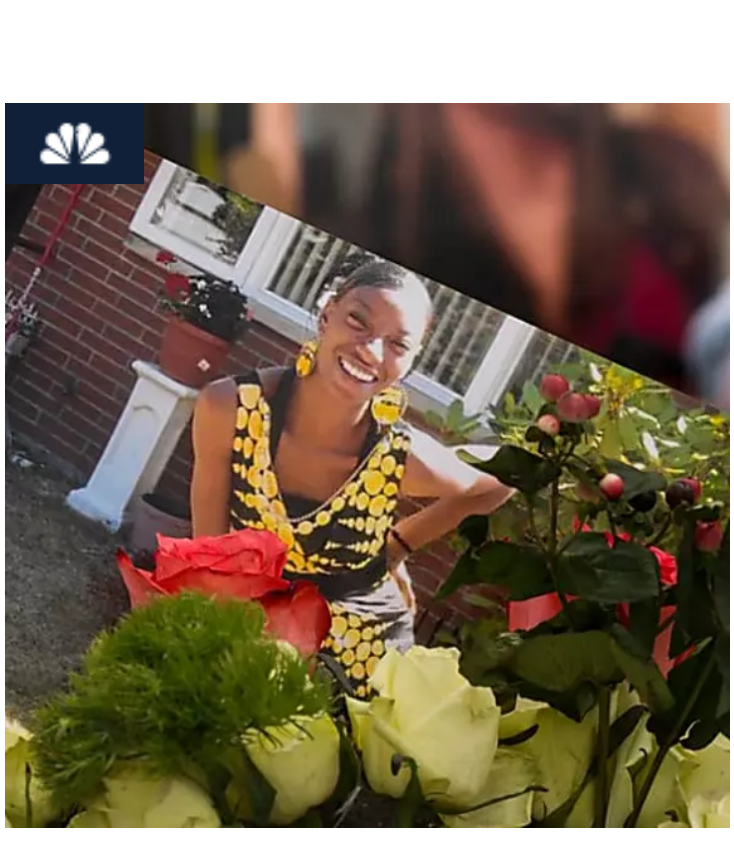
SPONSORED / SENIOR OFFERS | SEARCH A...
The Best SUVs For Seniors

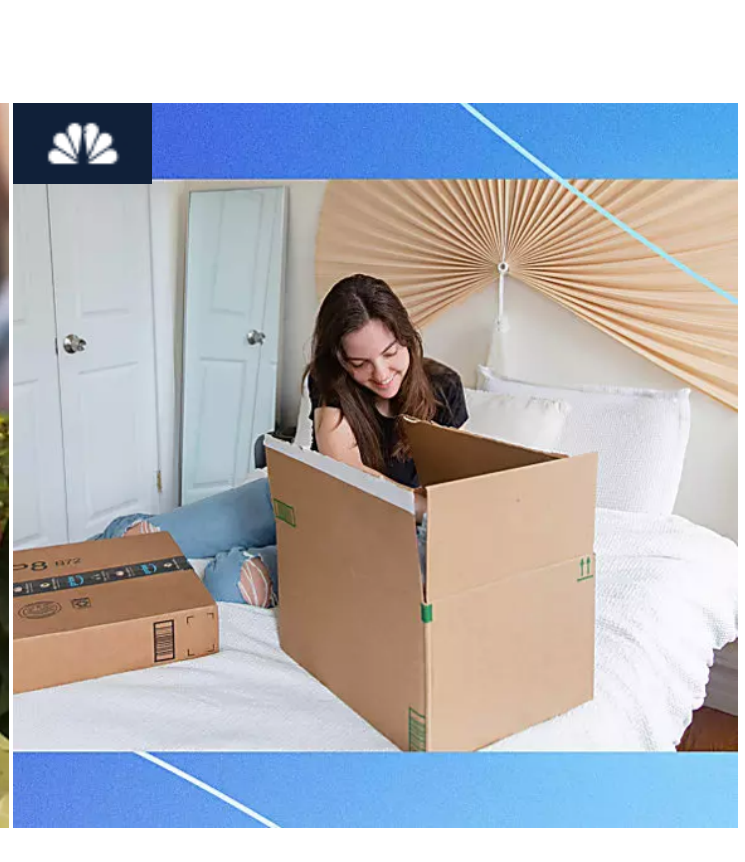
SPONSORED / GUTHEALTHWELLNESS
Top Heart Surgeon: This Simple Trick Helps Empty Your Bowels Every Morning

SPONSORED / AUTO INSIDER | SEARCH ADS
Subaru's Head-Turning Lineup Is Finally Here

More From NBC News







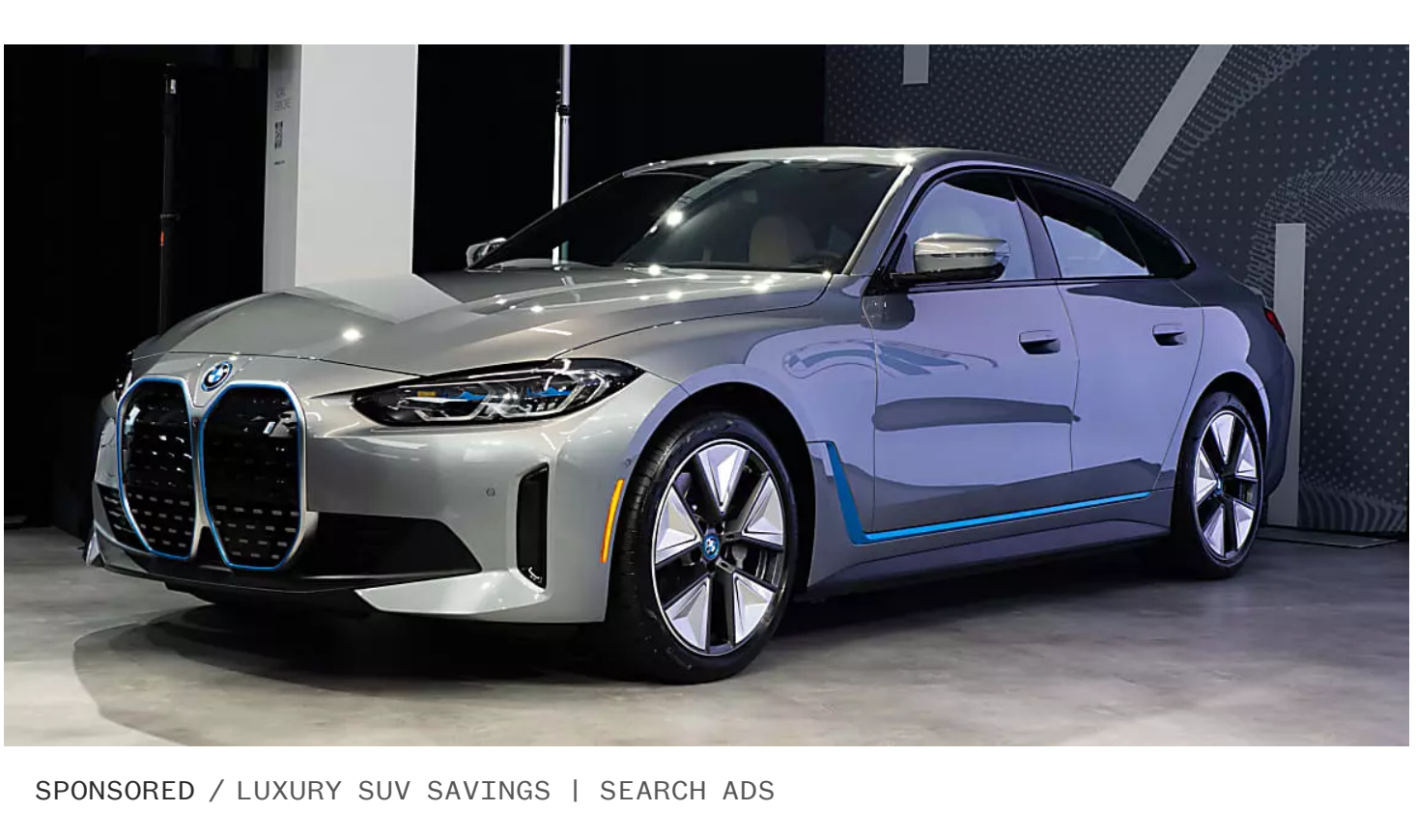
NBC NEWS / NEWS
A Minnesota mother drowned her 3 children and herself after her husband's death, authorities say

NBC NEWS / NEWS
Fatal police shooting of pregnant woman in Seattle was justified,...

NBC NEWS / SHOP
What to buy on Prime Day and what to skip, according to experts

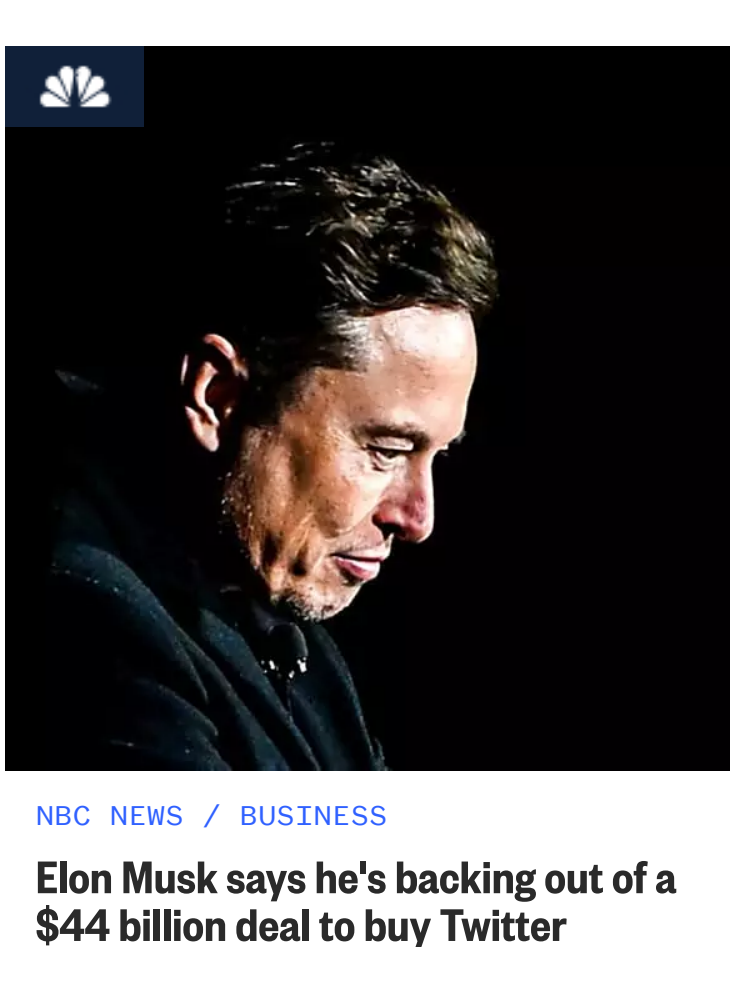
SPONSORED / INVESTING OUTLOOK
The “Great Reset” is here
A powerful market bubble in America is setting up a collapse that could be worse than 1929.

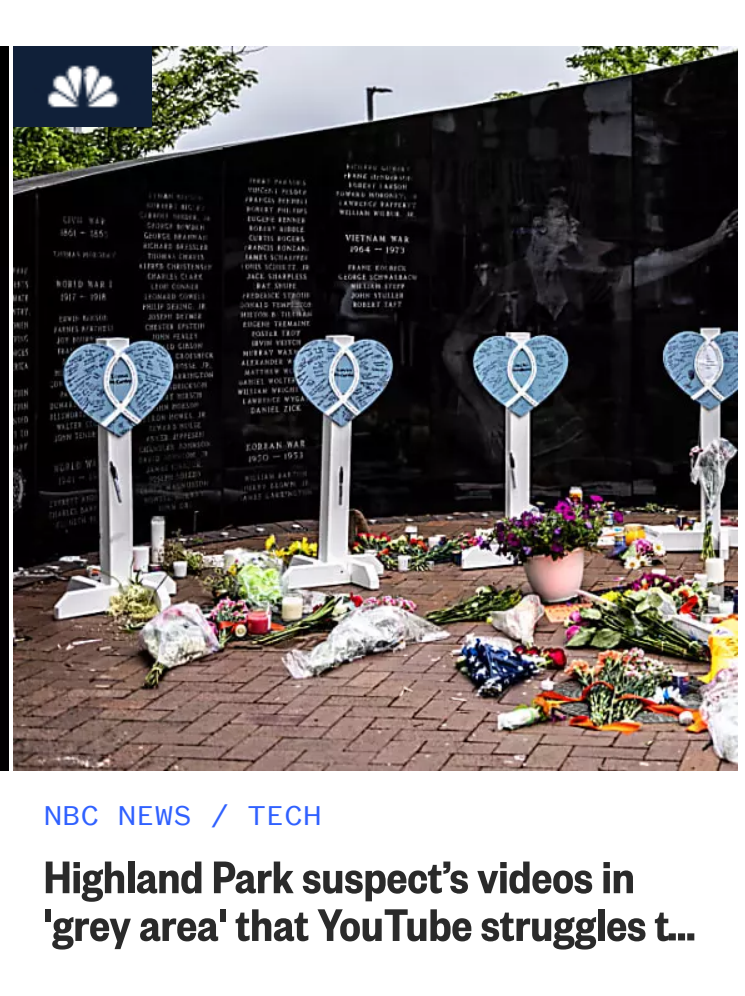
SPONSORED / ACQUTER.COM
We are selling off our remaining magic metal windmills. Great garden decor.



SPONSORED / US TO ANTARCTICA CRUISE DEALS
Unsold Luxury Suites On Antarctica Cruises From The US

SPONSORED / LUXURY SUV SAVINGS | SEARCH ADS
The Incredible New BMW Lineup Has Arrived





THINK / OPINION
Opinion | Yellowstone bison goring videos show a dangerous American tourist failing

NBC NEWS / BUSINESS
Elon Musk says he's backing out of a $44 billion deal to buy Twitter

NBC NEWS / TECH
Highland Park suspect’s videos in 'grey area' that YouTube struggles t...

© 2022 NBC UNIVERSAL